

WWF claims off the mark

The World Wrestling Federation insists two of its recent shows set records — one for attendance, one for pay-per-view orders. But the claims appear to have no basis in fact.

During the pay-per-view broadcast of Wrestlemania on March 24, announcers Gorilla Monsoon and Bobby (The Brain) Heenan continually said the event attracted more orders than any other event — of any kind — in the history of pay-per-view. The claim was repeated often over the weekend on various WWF television shows.



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BY DAVE MELTZER
FOR THE NATIONAL

Even if it were true, it would have been impossible to have any reliable figures at the time the original announcement was made. A few weeks before the event, the advance pay-per-view orders were well below the level at the same point for Wrestlemania VI, which had the lowest buy rate of any Wrestlemania. While it has become a tradition for wrestling promotions to inflate pay-per-view figures by as much as 100 percent, the only records set this week were in the exaggeration department. Indications are the show had the lowest pay-per-view buy rate in Wrestlemania history: between 2.5 and 3.5 percent — 2.8 percent being the most quoted figure within the wrestling industry.

A 2.8 percent buy rate would be approximately 360,000 orders, well below the record-setting 800,000 orders for the James (Buster) Douglas-Evander Holyfield fight, less than half the rate for Wrestlemanias IV and V and one-third the figure for Wrestlemania III.

The WWF also claimed an indoor entertainment attendance record for Japan on Saturday night, announcing a crowd of 64,618 for Wrestlefest '91 at the Tokyo Egg Dome. That figure, if accurate, would break the record of 64,500 set in the same building nine days earlier for Starrcade '91, co-promoted by New Japan and World Championship Wrestling.

Japanese reports indicated there were approximately 20,000 empty seats at Saturday's show, which reportedly was heavily papered by its sponsor, Megane Super Optical.

By contrast, I was at Starrcade, and counted just 109 vacant seats. The box office was closed more than an hour before the show started.

In the headliner at Wrestlefest, The Legion of Doom won by countout over Hulk Hogan, and Genichiro Tenryu in 14:03 when Hawk hit Hogan over the head with a chair.

ETC: The WWF may be close to scoring a major coup with the acquisition of **Sid Vicious**, a 6-foot-8, 300-pound bodybuilder whom many considered the most marketable wrestler in rival WCW's stable. The 31-year-old Vicious (**Sidney Eudy**) gave notice this past week that he was leaving WCW, although his exact departure date wasn't made clear. Vicious had reportedly asked for a raise from \$250,000 to \$350,000 per year and wanted to take the summer off as well, according to WCW officials. It is thought he'll join the WWF on Sept. 1. . . . Between pay-per-view, closed-circuit (in Canada) and the live gate, Wrestlemania should gross about \$11.9 million, the lowest figure since 1986.

Chad

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